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Abstract

Two poems, "Nine of Rods watches too much *Law & Order*" and "The Magician is a Drag King."

Keywords

poetry, television, age, death, transformation, man



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Two Poems

by Marty McConnell

Nine of Rods watches too much *Law & Order*

steam rises from my wet leg in the cold
October apartment. another month and ten
to fifteen degrees before the landlord
releases the heat. the third finger

of my left hand is a necrotic blue
where the pen bled out, necrotic
a word I learned from the TV
show about the girl tortured beyond

belief, showing just enough
for primetime, enough to wrestle
its way into my sleep because I didn't
turn away, hung on through the long shot
of the cops finding the chamber, the girl

alive in the drawer, her nails black, necrotic,
dying at the ends of her hands, the words
nuzzling their way into me, sexual
sadist, serial killer, necrotic, a world

I slid just past the door of as a kid, as
a girl, stalked by a man, the words paranoid
schizophrenic sliding around my ankles
like taffeta as I accelerated toward Ohio, away

from home and the neighbor with dead
icebox eyes. the stove is on and open, the heat
of the almost desperate and alone, dangerous
maybe but not more than a day-long roast –

whatever's sacred about the human body
has to do with its ability to generate
heat, to keep on despite everything. the bath
starts to get cold, I'm no longer young,

someone on the street below
is yelling, someone else singing
what could almost be a lullaby.
I turn off the stove, the night goes on,
we're all just a little on fire.

The Magician is a Drag King

there's a mouthful of man
where my cunt used to be. note
how I lean against this pole
like I've got the right chromosomes
for this game. like I was born
with this name. I guess
you could call it a compulsion

but tell me you don't code switch
from morning bed to subway wait
to secretary to barstool to bed again –
the stretch from femme to boi to butch to man's
the feathered edge of a scalpel, so close
the sweat even smells the same. and here
I am, your rock god andromorph.
you want more than the cock

in my pants and that's good, that's
what everybody's looking for, a little
freak in your Friday, a shapeshifter lover
so you've got every excuse to call
the wrong name, to name the wrong

body, the wrong end, to want
what boils low in the belly

where the good words don't go
but the letters tat themselves together
like lace under old ladies' fingers into *um*
and *oh* and the thousand practiced
hesitations – I like to let a little nipple
show, sometimes, to flash the twat
behind the dildo. I'm that snap

between nod and wake on the train
when your cheekbone hits the stranger's
shoulder, the *what damn* the *where*

am I – transgression's the infant
I give birth to every time the stage lights
go up. you're a sucker
for the sideshow and I'm your spirit
gum queen, your strapped-down
goddess, your husband with a little extra
in between, I'm Venus with a goatee
I marked on myself, no Hottentot

can shame me, you can't mock
this, I made this, my playlist
is gay bliss, go on DJ,
break it down – everybody
wants somebody. every body wants
some body. everybody wants. some.
body. a girl's got to use every tool

she's got and beg, barter, or steal
the rest. come on, you know you want
to be transformed. you know
you want to be a star. stick whatever

you want in those slacks. bind, pack,
beard if you want – what matters
is the saunter. the walk. how you carry
what you've got. the snake
around your waist is incapable
of lying, uroboros at the strip
joint, satan at the cabaret. unravel
what makes a man a man. name one

thing I can't buy at the five and dime
or the costume shop. when I take
the streets as me or the dude I now know

I can be, the sidewalks clear. this swagger
is a 21st-century alchemy. say you know me.
tell me now, who's the man.

Marty McConnell's work has been published in numerous anthologies and journals including Salt Hill Review, Rattle, Rattapallax, Fourteen Hills, Thirteenth Moon, Boxcar Poetry Review, Pedestal, The November 3rd Club, 2River View, Lodestar Quarterly, and Blue Fifth Review. She received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. After ten years in New York City, during which she helped found the literary nonprofit the louderARTS Project and co-curated its renowned reading series, she returned to her hometown of Chicago to establish its sister organization, Vox Ferus, through which she runs the popular Vox Ferus After Dark workshop series. www.martyoutloud.com

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